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ON PAGE A-1

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PAB - 36

Embassy Radiation Cut Back

Moscow Move Follows Talks By Both Sides

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The Soviet Union has greatly reduced the microwave radiation being beamed at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, the State Department said yesterday. But the department criticized the Russians for refusing to stop the bombardment.

The statement by department spokesman Robert Funseth broke months of official silence on the sensitive issue. It followed at least a dozen discussions of the problem between senior American and Russian officials since the radiation levels soared last year, and confidential briefings for Moscow diplomatic personnel on the potential health hazards.

The cause of the Soviet microwave bombardment has not been officially reported, and was not clarified by Funseth yesterday.

Unofficial reports have ascribed it to Soviet eavesdropping devices or to attempted jamming of American eavesdropping devices mounted atop the embassy roof.

Funseth declared that the "provisional judgment" of medical experts consulted by the State Department is that "there is no cause for concern regarding health hazards" at the present level of radiation.

However, he announced a \$300,000 contract with Johns Hopkins University for a medical records study to explore any possible connection between service in the Moscow embassy and poor health due to radiation. The records of several thousand U.S. officials and their dependents assigned to Moscow during the past 10 to 20 years will be studied.

Administration and congressional sources have said the Russians have been beaming microwaves at the embassy for at least 15 years.

U.S. concern rose sharply late last year when the Russians increased their signal and took other steps that intensified the problem.

A confidential U.S. report obtained by the Associated Press said the radiation reached maximum level of 18 microwatts per square centimeter late last year in certain heavily irradiated areas of the embassy.

Funseth said yesterday the exposure, at its highest was "closer to 20 than to 30 microwatts per square centimeter."

According to Funseth the present Soviet signal is two microwatts or less per square centimeter. He said aluminum screens recently installed on embassy windows reduce the effective strength to less than one microwatt per square centimeter inside the building.

The maximum safe exposure for microwave radiation adopted by the Soviet Academy of Sciences is 10 microwatts per square centimeter. Thus, at times the

Russians evidently were beaming a dangerous level of radiation at the embassy by their own standards.

However, the U.S. safety standard adopted by the armed services, the Labor Department and the American National Standards Institute (a private group serving industry) is one thousand times higher—a maximum continuous exposure of 10,000 microwatts per square centimeter.

Dr. Charlotte Silverman, deputy director of the division of biological effects of the Food and Drug Administration, explained that the higher U.S. safety level is based on the capacity of microwaves to heat human tissues.

The Russian standards, on the other hand, consider physiological changes involving blood pressure, heart rate, endocrine or behavioral manifestations which may not be based on measurable heat effects and which U.S. scientists consider less well established.

Despite the State Department claim that there is no showing of a health hazard to Americans from the radiation beamed by the Russians, Funseth declared that "we regret that the Soviets have failed to turn off the transmission completely, thereby in our judgment demonstrating a lack of concern for the living and working conditions of persons in Moscow."

Officials said negotiations with the Russians will continue in an effort to bring Soviet termination of the microwave signal.

Funseth said no U.S. concessions were made to the Russians in exchange for the recent reduction in the radiation level. However, he would not comment when asked about published reports that the United States has removed some electronic intelligence equipment from the embassy roof in Moscow in return for reduced microwave bombardment by the Soviets.